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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

EEB FOR A/S DAN SULLIVAN
USDOC FOR DAS PAUL DYCK
PRT BABIL FOR DON WELTY
PRT NAJAF FOR DARREL BROWN

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: GOT URGES GREATER U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN NEXT YEAR'S
TURKEY-IRAQ TRADE FAIR

REF: ANKARA 850

- ¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The 3rd Iraqi International Trade Fair kicked off in the southeastern Turkish city of Gaziantep on May 22. According to organizers, over 400 local and foreign exhibitors from 32 countries were present at the four-day event. High-ranking Turkish and Iraqi officials in attendance told us they regard this fair as the major annual event highlighting the burgeoning bilateral trade relationship, which is forecast to top \$5 billion in 2009. U.S. Consulate Adana took the lead in setting up and staffing the U.S. Mission booth.
- ¶2. (SBU) ACTION REQUEST: Since the USG has a strong interest in fostering closer Turkish-Iraqi relations, Mission Turkey strongly recommends enhancing U.S. official participation at this event in 2009 and encouraging more American private-sector participation. END ACTION REQUEST AND SUMMARY.
- ¶3. (U) On May 22, Turkish State Minister Kursad Tuzmen and three Iraqi officials -- Trade Minister Abdulfalah Hassan Al-Sudani, Construction and Housing Minister Byan Dzayee and Water Resources Minister Abdul Latif Rashid -- presided over the opening of the 3rd Iraqi International Fair in Gaziantep. Turkey's Special Envoy to Iraq Murat Ozelik and other high-ranking officials also joined the ceremony. In his opening remarks, Tuzmen said he hoped the fair would help boost annual Turkish-Iraqi trade from \$3.5 billion to \$5 billion next year. At a joint press conference, Al-Sudani recommended opening two additional border gates to increase trade volume and strengthen Turkish-Iraqi relations. During the same press event, Tuzmen referred to the hardships faced by Turkish companies due to Iraqi arrears; he also said he was sanguine about timely repayment prospects.
- ¶4. (SBU) Other diplomatic missions represented at the fair included Romania, Iran, Poland, Italy, and China. China's private sector had a strong presence at the fair; with over 15 exhibitors, they along with the Iraqis had the densest representation. Chinese medicines, timber products, wine wholesalers, organic agriculture representatives, engineering products and others were on display. According to the press, over the four-day fair a total of 52,000 visitors passed through the exhibit hall.
- ¶5. (SBU) U.S. Consulate Adana decorated and staffed a booth from which we distributed materials on U.S. foreign commercial activities, American history and culture, visas, and study in the United States. PRT officers from Najaf and al-Hillah supported participation by the chambers of commerce from those cities. (Comment: visitors had mixed reactions to the U.S. Mission booth during the fair: many took the opportunity to take a swipe at U.S. policy in Iraq, and some were downright hostile. Since most inquiries to the U.S. stand concerned doing

business in Iraq, it would be helpful next year to have representatives from FCS in Iraq on hand to support our presence at the fair. End comment.)

16. (SBU) Both GOT and GOI representatives expressed an interest in having high-level USG participation at the event. This year, the GOT had invited the Secretary of Commerce and Ambassador Wilson, but without sufficient lead time. In a brief pull-aside at the opening ceremony, Tuzman told the Adana PO that the GOT wants enhanced American participation next year. Turkey's interest in a strong U.S. role at this fair and on Iraq business opportunities generally was a prominent theme at the U.S.-Turkey Economic Partnership Commission meeting April 17 in Washington. The Iraqi Trade minister, Abdul Al-Sudani, concurred, noting that while there are numerous privately sponsored Iraq trade fairs, including one in Jordan widely attended by American companies, the Gaziantep fair is the only fair outside Iraq that the GOI officially sponsors and for that reason it wants a more significant American presence. There were no known American exhibitors at the fair this year.

GREEN